Ryder System hits right note to get attention

By Max B. Knudson
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Ryder System Inc., the national transportation company, came to Salt Lake City Friday to make its presence known — a 265-employee, $163 million annual revenues presence — to the community.

"I don't think people here know that Ryder is as large as it is in Salt Lake City," said M. Anthony Burns, president and chief executive officer of the Miami-based Ryder, which logged total revenues of $2.4 billion last year.

M. Anthony Burns

To help change that perception, and to let the community know that Ryder gives as generously as it earns, Wendell J. Ashton, president of the Utah Symphony, announced at a Hotel Utah press conference Friday afternoon that Ryder will sponsor two symphony concerts, Friday and Saturday nights, with a $45,000 donation. The all-Beethoven concerts, both of which were sold out, feature American pianist Andre Watts.

Burns has a number of local connections. A native of Mesquite, Nev., he is a graduate of Brigham Young University and his wife, Joyce, is a native of Heber City.

But Burns made it clear that Ryder's sponsorhip of the Utah Symphony concerts is not due to his local roots. Rather it is part of the company's support of the arts and civic organizations in cities throughout the country.

"We at Ryder System believe that it is important to support activities that enhance the quality of life in cities in which we have a significant presence," said Burns. "Over the past two years, our presence in Salt Lake City has grown quickly as a result of acquisitions, so we are particularly pleased to have been given the opportunity to sponsor these Utah Symphony concerts."

Burns said that in coming months Ryder's Salt Lake operations "will be looking for additional ways in which we can contribute to the community."

In addition to its high-profile Ryder Truck Rental Inc., Burns said, Ryder has made other acquisitions in Utah during the past 24 months. Interstate Contract Carrier Corp. was acquired last year. It operates nationwide, full-truckload, irregular route common carriage business out of Salt Lake City.

Western Express, another nationwide, full-truckload carrier Ryder acquired earlier this month, is also headquartered here.

Commercial Carriers Inc., an auto transport company, operates from two railheads in Salt Lake City delivering cars and light trucks to dealers throughout the Mountain West.

Revenue of Ryder System was up 36 percent in the first quarter, the highest of any first quarter in the company's history, said Burns. Moreover, he said, Ryder has enjoyed record earnings in 35 out of the last 38 quarters.

Burns said the company, which employs 24,000 nationwide, has had a habit of "sticking to our knitting" by keeping its growth within the transportation field. But he speculated that in the not-too-distant future, Ryder may expand into non-transportation areas.